

Securing Our Nation: Controlling America's Borders and Preventing Terrorism

Courtesy: House Committee on Homeland Security

House Republicans are committed to taking steps to enhance security along our nation's borders to ensure terrorists cannot enter the United States illegally by: establishing operational control of all borders and ports through enhanced Border Patrol operations, physical barriers, and state-of-the-art technology; ending the "catch and release" practice along the southwest border; streamlining operations within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) border security agencies; and promoting both international and domestic policies that will deter further illegal entry into the United States.

Establishing Operational Control of All Borders and Ports

- Recognizing the need to bolster Border Patrol and surveillance capabilities to establish operational control of our borders and prevent the unlawful entry of terrorists and potential criminals, the bill:
 - Requires DHS and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to develop a joint strategic plan that will provide the Border Patrol with military support and increased use of DOD surveillance.
 - Requires DHS to conduct comprehensive risk assessments of all ports of entry and international land and maritime borders to prevent the entry of terrorists and weapons.
 - Authorizes 1,000 new, full-time port of entry inspectors over the next four years and the training of 1,500 additional K-9 units over the next five years.
 - Establishes physical barriers and incorporates widespread, state-of-the-art surveillance technology, including cameras, sensors, radar, satellite, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), in order to ensure one hundred percent coverage of our borders.

Eliminating the "Catch and Release" Practice

- This year alone, some 115,000 illegal aliens from countries other than Mexico have been apprehended by the Border Patrol, only to be released due to a lack of detention space. Realizing that this so-called "catch and release" practice presents a clear danger to our nation's homeland security efforts, the bill:
 - Requires mandatory detention for all illegal immigrants who are apprehended at U.S. land borders attempting to cross illegally, by Oct. 1, 2006.
 - Requires all illegal immigrants apprehended at U.S. borders to remain in custody until removal from the country.

- Requires that DHS use every available detention bed, in addition to authorizing new detention space and contracting with state and local jails for additional space.
- Requires that, in the interim period before Oct. 1, 2006, illegal immigrants who are released pending an immigration removal hearing will have to post bond of at least \$5,000.

Effectively Organizing the Border Security Agencies Within DHS

- Recognizing the need to eliminate a number of identified organizational, operational, and fiscal problems and poor communication between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the two main border security agencies within DHS, the bill:
 - Requires the Secretary to take immediate action to address the lack of coordination between ICE and CBP by requiring improved intelligence sharing and implementing measures to determine the effectiveness of the Department's border security efforts.
 - Places Air and Marine Operations (AMO) directly under the authority of the Secretary, eliminating current bureaucracy and allowing for a more flexible, coordinated air program capable of providing tracking, deterrence, rapid response, and investigative support to multiple DHS agencies.

Promoting International Policies to Deter Illegal Immigration

- In addition to taking action domestically, the bill promotes international policies to help deter illegal immigration and protect valid claims of asylum. This includes:
 - Requiring DHS to report to Congress on the progress of cross-border security agreements signed between Mexico and Canada and the United States, including the Smart Border Accord and the Security Partnership for Prosperity.
 - Authorizing the Secretary of Homeland Security to refuse visas to foreign nationals from countries that deny or delay the repatriation of their own nationals.
 - Protecting valid claims of asylum and fear of persecution through a review of the current Border Patrol training protocol, and taking measures to ensure integrity of the process.

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